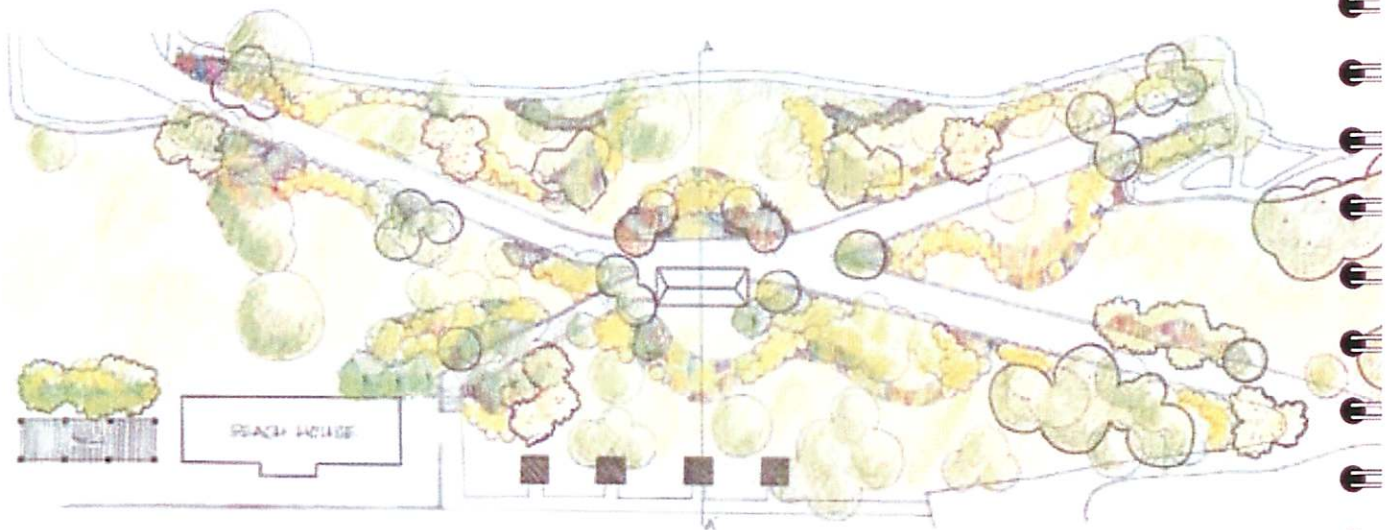


8.0

BASIC NATIVE LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Native Landscape Design can be anything from a very structured and formal garden created with native plants to an area that is just a jumbled riot of native plants that is "designed" only in that it has borders (the so-called "prairie garden"). That is one of the beauties of native plants: you can have them pretty much any way you want, with very few rules.



PLANTING DESIGN



SCALE 1" = 20'

This planting plan is an example of a formal use of native plants. In this manner, the plantings deliver the benefits of a formal garden (shapes, heights and colors planned and controlled to a design concept) with the benefits of native plants (long-lived perennials, low maintenance, support and habitat for birds, butterflies and more, excellent stormwater infiltration to control runoff and recharge the groundwater, etc.)

1. Design *with* the land

Observing the existing landscape around you can tell you a great deal about what will work and what won't in your landscape. For example, many property owners and designers like to incorporate evergreen vegetation in their planting or design. However, most commercially available evergreen species don't perform well in calcium-rich soils. Much of the Midwest is underlain with limestone/dolomite bedrock, as evidenced by limestone outcrops and road cuts. This produces calcium-rich soils, and designing without considering this constraint of the land could result in failed plantings, disease-prone plantings or excessive maintenance (and costs).

2. Design from the right beginning

Conventional design tends to use a "clean slate" approach, where the owner or designer envisions the property as vegetatively void and adds material to an imagined austere environment. Designing with native plants takes the decidedly *opposite* approach; imagine your property is *covered* with the appropriate native vegetation and carve out of that system the spaces needed for the intended site use (building, parking, lawn, etc.).

3. Design with ecological parameters

Your design should not threaten native systems, should not contain invasive species, nor should it contain native species that are not indigenous to your region. It should take into consideration soil types and terrain. For instance, any design for the side of a hill should have anti-erosion properties.

4. Designing with native plants

Use appropriate species in appropriate locations; this is a design ethic that must be maintained for successful native planting design. When designing naturalized areas, wetland species should be planted in wet areas, dry species in dry areas, species native to Wisconsin in Wisconsin, species native to Georgia in Georgia.

5. Minimize high-maintenance areas.

The cost-savings of using native plants are better realized with larger and more naturalized use. The greatest cost-savings are found where large areas can be converted to one type of native-plant community, such as prairie, from conventional maintenance-intensive use, such as lawn. The less formalized the native planting, the less maintenance required; large tracts of prairie require less vigilant weeding than formalized native plant beds adjacent to building entrances or in formalized areas.

Benefits of Native vs. Conventional Design:

1. Native landscapes function more efficiently.

Using plants indigenous to a region means they will be better suited for existing site conditions such as soil, hydrology, season and climate. In nearly all cases, native plants do not require additional nutrient input or pest control.

2. Similarly, local insect, bird and animal populations will be quicker to adopt and live in native landscapes.

In fact, if you live in a heavily developed or farmed area, your native planting may become a magnet for native insects, birds and animals, since it is a natural area with indigenous plants that they depend on. It may become your own private wildlife preserve.

3. Native landscapes provide higher-quality wildlife habitat.

Plants indigenous to the region provide the proper mast (food) and cover needs of wildlife indigenous to the region. Often the most beneficial organisms such as butterflies, dragonflies, and some bird species require specific native-plant communities for healthy development. For instance, Monarch Butterflies *only* lay eggs on milkweed plants and the larvae *only* feed on milkweed leaves.

